



Iowa General Assembly

2004 Committee Briefings

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

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JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND JUDICIAL RESOURCES STUDY COMMITTEE

Meeting Dates: [November 9, 2004](#)

Purpose. *This compilation of briefings on legislative interim committee meetings and other meetings and topics of interest to the Iowa General Assembly, written by the Legal Services Division staff of the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency, describes committee activities or topics. The briefings were originally distributed in the Iowa Legislative Interim Calendar and Briefing. Official minutes, reports, and other detailed information concerning the committee or topic addressed by a briefing can be obtained from the committee's Internet page listed above, from the Iowa General Assembly's Internet page at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>, or from the agency connected with the meeting or topic described.*

JUDICIAL DISTRICT AND JUDICIAL RESOURCES STUDY COMMITTEE

November 9, 2004

Cochairperson: Senator Donald Redfern

Cochairperson: Representative Gene Maddox

Overview. The committee continued its discussion from the 2003 interim and received testimony from the Judicial Branch and National Center for State Courts (NCSC) regarding the development of a judicial workload model and the implementation of best practices. The committee was authorized for one meeting day.

Judicial Branch. Justice Marsha Ternus, Iowa Supreme Court, provided an overview of the challenges facing the Iowa Judicial Branch. She stated the Judicial Branch continues to struggle with the equitable distribution of current resources and is making a good faith effort to stay within their budget. Justice Ternus noted that the challenges within the Judicial Branch have also created opportunities. She stated audit teams have been formed to implement best practices in certain clerk of court offices around the state. She stated juvenile court officers are also studying implementing best practices and that time standards to process cases are being restudied. Justice Ternus also stated that while the number of overall case filings have declined, the demand for judicial services has increased because more complex cases are being handled by the Judiciary.

National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Mr. Daniel Hall of the NCSC stated that the keys to effective court administration are centered around three principles: 1) obtaining resources, 2) being accountable for the resources obtained, and 3) managing those resources. He noted that historically, courts justify their requests for resources through the number of court filings. However, he said courts around the country are now moving towards establishing workload assessment models as a way of determining the amount of resources needed to effectively manage the courts. Members of the committee commented that the current Iowa Judicial Model established by the NCSC does not factor in the use of best practices among the judicial districts. Mr. Hall commented that best practices are difficult to quantify, since best practices vary among the districts. Senator Redfern commented that establishing credibility of the Iowa Judicial Model is key to obtaining consensus from the various constituency groups. Mr. Hall stated that it appears from the Iowa Judicial Model that Iowa has enough judges but some judges are not in the right places. Senator Fraise commented that his constituents do not want to see consolidation in the court system.

Next Steps. The committee concurred that an assessment of judicial workloads needs to be performed and discussed the possibility of reviewing new options for implementing some type of measurement for reviewing judicial workloads.

LSA Staff: Joe McEniry, Legal Services, (5415) 281-3189; Rachele Hjelm, Legal Services, (515) 281-8127; Tim McDermott, Legal Services, (515) 281-3444

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